

**Minutes of a governing body meeting of Charles Dickens on Thursday,
14th July, 2016 at 6.00 pm**

Governors Present: Nik Nicol (Chair), Shulamit Ambalu, Cassie Buchanan (Headteacher), Emma Gleadhill, Matthew Harris, Laura Johnson, Claire Maugham, Andrew Mayer, Annastazia Nyaga, Linda Taylor

Others Present: Malcolm Booth, Michael Eggleton, Jemima Rhys Evans (Associate Members)

Clerk: Carrie Fentum

The meeting started at 6.07 pm and was quorate.

- 1 Governors welcomed Lee Coley from Stone King, a leading firm of Educational Lawyers to speak about Academisation. He made the following points:
With the appointment of a new Education secretary it was not certain what changes there might be to education policy but that it would appear to be likely that there would be a shift away from schools being run by Local Authorities and that schools would be run through academy trusts.
The view that the academy ideology is the only way to improve standards is now too firmly embedded to change.
The current favoured model is the Multi Academy Trust, it is unlikely that that the school would be able to become a Single Academy Trusts. Some schools were setting up empty MATs but genuine MATS are preferred.
The school is in a good position. Good and outstanding schools will be able to have more say in their future although it is not clear what is meant by 'coasting' schools.
As local authorities provide fewer services the issue will be on the agenda and it is better for schools to make decisions and take a lead before they are forced to.

Governors asked the following questions:

Apart from the government agenda, is there a reason to become an academy?

In the past (2010) there were additional funds for schools that converted however that is no longer available. Schools that became academies would not pay the top slice to the LA but they would need to source the services that the LA currently provides which may prove more expensive. There are some aspects where the school can be more creative for example in the use of land or in admissions. In a MAT it is possible for schools to support each other and for staff to move within the MAT. It may be possible to make savings through

economies of scale e.g. sharing resources like Educational Psychologists and Speech therapists.

How can the school ensure that it preserves its autonomy, any loss of autonomy could affect the schools ability to attract and retain good management?

In order to guarantee autonomy this school would need to be the lead school within a MAT. If a school joined a larger chain it would have to work within the parameters that have already been set. The lead school would be able to set the parameters. This school currently leads teaching in the School Alliance.

It was noted that the Diocese is looking to set up a MAT with the borough's church schools. The Local Authority may then set up a MAT with the remaining schools. Other Local Authorities are setting up MATS and while some are doing well, others are not.

What is it like to be part of a MAT?

The organisation would involve a change to a more corporate structure. Trustees are appointed according to a skills based assessment. It was suggested that governors talk to governors in other schools that are further along this journey.

Where does the funding come from, how and when is it paid?

It comes directly from the Educational Funding Agency and is paid at the beginning of each month. Pupil Premium is paid quarterly.

Can a MAT be the subject of a takeover?

Usually only if it were failing. Good and outstanding school would not be susceptible to a takeover although a school could be considered to be coasting or could be failing financially.

How would a take-over happen?

The Regional Schools Commissioner would identify academy sponsors who would be asked to take over the running of the school.

When should we be making a decision, can we wait until the government becomes more stable?

There may be announcements towards the end of the summer with legislation following in the autumn. The school should be forming a view by the end of the year.

Governors thanked Lee Coley for helping them to understand more about the options and thanked Malcolm Booth for organising the visit.

Governors expressed the following views about the options:

- It is important for governors to understand the options and to be prepared for the changes
- The school needs to be clear about its ambition and vision and how the objectives are best served.

- Being part of the Teaching school alliance has been helpful. It is important that the school does not become isolated.
- It would not be a good idea to join an existing MAT.
- That once the school has joined a MAT it is not possible to opt out.
- That a MAT might have more control of its finances than a school controlled by the LA.
- That a MAT might replicate the LA. Governors in academy groups have experienced delays in receiving funding.
- If the school is to realise its ambition it would need to be the lead school in a MAT.
- That there is capacity within the leadership team to do some of the groundwork now.
- That it would be useful to find out the views of parents and how they perceive academies.
- That the options could be considered at the governors strategy day.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Carolyn Forsyth and David Moore consent was given for their absence.

The clerk undertook to attempt to make contact with Carolyn Forsyth as her email address did not appear to be working.

3 **Declarations of Interest in the agenda**

There were no declarations of interest in the agenda.

4 **Minutes of the last governing body meeting on Thursday, 3rd March, 2016**

4.1 Approval of the minutes

Governors approved the minutes of the last governing body meeting on Thursday, **3rd March, 2016**. The minutes were signed as an accurate record.

4.2 Matters Arising (not appearing elsewhere on the agenda)

Item 3.2

- The Chair of Governors emailed the NGA's New Governor Checklist as requested.
- He has undertaken the NGA's Chair of Governors' 360 appraisal which he had found very useful. He recommended that future Chairs go through the process.
- The Chair reminded governors that his term as chair would end in September and had asked whether other governors would consider taking the role (two existing governors said they would do so in future but not yet).

- The Headteacher reported that Charlotte Sharman and Bessemer Grange schools were not suitable for governor visits but undertook to contact Surrey Square School. **ACTION Headteacher**
- The missing information on governance has been put on the website.
- Matthew Harris has written the policy on the commissioning of work from governors but it was yet to be circulated. **ACTION: Clerk.**

Item 4

The Headteacher undertook to put an advert in the next newsletter for parents to nominate candidates for the Partnership governor vacancy with time/project management, HR or IT, skills. It was agreed that the advert should have a clear criteria and include the duties of governors and that it should ask for people to indicate their interest in the first instance. The Chair, Headteacher and Emma Gleadhill volunteered to interview any potential candidates, and it was suggested that the criteria and the process that will be used for selection should be communicated in the advert.

Action: Headteacher

Item 4.3

- The new governors, David Moore, Laura Johnson and Carolyn Forsyth have been on the new governor induction training modules.
- Safeguarding training has been booked for 18th July 2016.

Item 5.1

The Headteacher undertook to include the more comprehensive link governor role document in future Headteacher reports, and to put the list of link governors onto the school website. **Action: Headteacher**

5 Governing Body

5.1 Governing body membership and vacancies

Governors received the report as circulated with the agenda. It was noted that the re-appointment of Andrew Mayer has been confirmed by the Local Authority.

It was noted that the terms of office of the following governors were due to end soon:

Mr Nik Nicol	Parent Governor	19.11.2016
Ms Anastazia Nyaga	Parent Governor	19.11.2016

Nik Nicol said that he was planning to stand for re-election and would be happy to continue as chair of governors if he were re-elected. Anastazia Nyaga said that she would not be standing for re-election.

5.2 Governing body meeting attendance

Governors received the report as circulated with the agenda

5.3 Governor Training and Development

Governors received the report as circulated with the agenda

Annastazia Nyaga reported that she had attended training on promoting mental health and well being. One of the key themes of the training had been how quickly the mental health of a child can change. Annastazia undertook to circulate the papers from the training to all governors. She said that parents could also benefit from this type of training.

It was reported that Emma Gleadhill and Michael Eggleton had attended a conference in March about sharing best practice and that they had made a successful bid for funding to develop this in the school.

6 Committees

6.1 Committee membership and link governor roles

Governors received the report as circulated with the agenda. The Headteacher undertook to put the list of link governors onto the school website.

Action: Headteacher

6.2 Link governor Reports

None were received

6.3 Committee meeting attendance

Governors received the report as circulated with the agenda

6.4 Committee meeting minutes

Governors received the minutes of the following committee meetings:

- Resources Committee 26/4/16
- Children Families and Communities Committee 28/6/2016
- Curriculum and Standards Committee 13/4/2016 and 5/7/2016

Resources Committee 26/4/16

Malcolm Booth gave the following verbal report:

- The budget had been the main focus of the discussion
- The issue of late payments from Southwark is and on-going issue
- Pupil premium plus funds are very slow to reach the school
- The local authority take a Pupil Premium Plus top slice which pays for a Virtual Head

Children Families and Communities Committee 28/6/2016

Emma Gleadhill reported that there were no major issues but recommended that Governors read the report she had circulated about relationship building.

Improving pupil behaviour for learning and low level behaviour issues are on-going issues and work is being done with the Educational Psychologist.

Curriculum and Standards Committee 13/4/2016 and 5/7/2016

Claire Maugham reported that this had been a busy time and that the committee had considered the summer data.

95% of year one pupils had passed the phonics screening.

There had been a brief discussion about homework. It had been felt that this could be looked at jointly by this committee and Children, Families and Community Committee and that educational expertise as well as parental feedback should inform schools policy on home school learning.

7 Headteacher's Written Report

The Headteacher thanked Michael Eggleton and Jemima Rhys-Evans for all their hard work while she had been on maternity leave.

Governors received the written Headteacher's Report as circulated via e-mail prior to the meeting, and the Headteacher gave the following verbal report:

- The numbers of pupils with SEN is under-recorded and is likely to rise. The new SENCO is starting in September will be uncovering learning difficulties.
- There are some unfilled school places in the upper years. The school actively seeks pupils to fill places lower down the school. Once children reach years 4, 5 and 6 they are less likely to move schools. Four children have left in year six, a combination of moving away or transferring to independent schools.
- The school has more looked after children than any other in the borough but payment of pupil premium plus is very late.
- As the budget becomes tighter the school is rethinking pupil premium learning support in order to make it more equitable

and the impact more measurable. There are 138 children on PP, last year there were 162.

- Reading scores demonstrate that pupils are making progress in reading. The Oxford Reading Tree reading scheme is now being used in the early years and will be rolled out to years 1 and 2. It has been very successful.
- Creative Art Week was a great success with work based on the wordless book 'The Journey'. Children were able to develop their own passions and the work had included singing, dancing and poetry.
- The School has been awarded UNICEF rights respecting schools level 1. The school will now be working towards level 2, which is the highest level.
- Work has begun on the building expansion work on the ground floor. The contractors are good and the year 1 classrooms will be completed by September. For the rest of the work the local authority has yet to sign the main contract but it is noted that it is hoped it will be in place by 22nd July. Once this is in place there will be a new deadline for completion of the works.
- The school is working as part of the Teaching School Alliance, a group of schools led by this school providing school support and development, and for teacher training. It is still new and very exacting.

Laura Johnson left the meeting at 8.15

- The year 6 SATS results showed that the school achieved 78% in the combined measure compared with a Southwark average of 56% and a national average of 53%. A progress measure is yet to be developed.
- The summer term has seen a significant reduction in the number of yellow behaviour forms and low level behaviour has improved. There appears to be an increase in the number of Red forms. Many of these were for one child for whom the school needed to capture evidence as part of their SEN assessment. When these are taken out the level of red forms looks more normal.

Linda Taylor left the meeting at 8.35

- The school has secured funding to pioneer the RULER programme which will help assess and embed emotional intelligence into the curriculum.

Governors asked the following questions:

Could the numbers of pupils with dyslexia have been captured at an earlier stage?

Sometimes conditions cannot be diagnosed until children reach a particular key stage or they encounter a level of challenge. Their

condition may be suspected before then but cannot be confirmed

What is being done to screen children for dyslexia?

We have re-instated dyslexia screening but need to be careful that it is not confused with children who are learning to read more slowly. It is an area which can be improved. TA's have recently had 2 days training.

Are there tools to detect dyscalculia?

The school has brought in software to detect this but there is room for improvement. There is a disadvantage to screening as there may be other issues which are not shown in the results and might therefore be overlooked, the new SENCO will be able to guide on this.

What is the reason for the fall in the number of children eligible for pupil premium?

There were high numbers in last year's year 6. The numbers of children eligible for FSM has dropped now that families on working tax credits are not eligible for FSM.

Is the school able to offer counselling to pupils who need it?

Some staff are undertaking training. One member of staff is undertaking an MA and there has been training for Emotional Literacy Support Assistants. This will continue. The school is not able to provide a counsellor. this is an unregulated service and there is no obligation for the school to provide one. The school would prefer to keep provision in house.

Could the school use volunteer counsellors?

This would be difficult to quality assure and it is better for the children to feel comfortable with what is provided.

Is there any support available for staff?

The Educational Psychologist has been able to put staff in touch with support.

How far behind is the building project?

About three months, it is now in the School Improvement plan as Partially on target.

Who is the project manager for the work?

It is the Local Authority.

Could the dynamic of the Teaching Schools Alliance form the basis of a MAT?

Sometimes alliances like this can turn into MATs but not always. A MAT would need one person to become the accountable person and it would depend on who that was.

Can we compare progress of pupils this year with last year?

It is not possible because we would be comparing a completely different curriculum.

Is there a way that the work on parental engagement and interventions can be developed to explore opportunities for enriching language and conversation?

This would be an excellent way to develop this area and will be investigated.

There may be a perception amongst some parents that the Headteacher's discretion is not always applied fairly in relation to authorising absences.

There have been no complaints but if parents feel that they are not being treated fairly they should be encouraged to feed that back to the school. The school is always open to feedback.

The Policy is clear but in order for governors to be satisfied that there is no bias, requests and decisions could be something that the chair of governors and head discuss at their regular meetings.

8 Safeguarding – STANDING ITEM

There were no items to report

9 Budget 2016/2017

Governors adopted the budget as approved at committee.

10 Statutory Responsibilities

10.1 Policy Schedule

Governors **Agreed** to Adopt Terms of Reference for Curriculum and Standards Committee

Governors agreed that the following policies would be in operation from September and that they would be formally adopted at the next meeting of the Governing Board:

- Complaints Policy
- Parental Leave and Pay Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

10.2 DBS Checks

Governors were reminded that DBS checks must be completed up to date by September.

10.3 Local Offer

Governors were made aware of the Local Offer from Southwark Council (see www.localoffer.southwark.gov.uk, in particular the "Have Your Say" section)

11 Dates and Times of Future Meetings

It was agreed that dates would be set at the strategy meeting and circulated to all governors. **Action: Chair**

12 Any other Business

The School Improvement Plan will be considered at the Governors' Strategy Day in late August/early September. The Chair will arrange a Doodle poll to find the best date for the Strategy Day.

The Governors thanked Michal Eggleton and Jemima Rhys Evans for their hard work and for doing a great job in running the school during the term.

Cassie Buchannan was warmly welcomed back to school following her maternity leave.

There was no further business.

The meeting ended at 8.55

Date..... Signed.....